

Making Mealtimes Meaningful!

Beginnings



Beginnings 2005-2006(2)

Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Childcare and Early Childhood Education, Little Rock, AR
School of Human Environmental Sciences, 1UA, Fayetteville, AR

Beginnings

Take Exercise Breaks!

When children have been sitting or are getting restless, insert an exercise break. Just a few breaks a day will help make sure that children are getting enough exercise and will help make it easier for them to be attentive!

- Jump up and down five times (count as you jump).
- Ask child to think of what to do next.
(stretch, crawl, climb, run in place, etc.)



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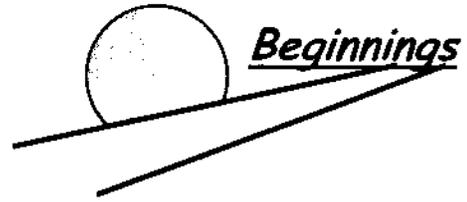
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About the Benchmarks

Many of the activities in *Beginnings* address multiple benchmarks, which are not all necessarily referenced. Check the *Arkansas Early Childhood Education Framework Handbook for Three & Four Year Old Children (2004)*.



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Making Mealtimes Meaningful!



The goal of this issue of ***Beginnings*** is to encourage families (and classrooms) to make mealtimes meaningful. It is increasingly difficult for today's families, where two parents work fulltime outside the home, to find time to eat together. Sometimes, unavoidably, each family member eats when it is convenient. It has been demonstrated that when children are involved in the process of preparing foods, and families eat together, that there are many benefits. Children are more likely to eat a variety of foods, especially if they can help in the preparation. It is a wonderful opportunity for family members to share their daily experiences and keep in touch with what is happening. Hopefully, the ideas and activities included in this issue will encourage caregivers, parents and children to choose nutritious foods and to try to schedule at least one meal daily where everyone can meet and eat together. When children acquire early habits of having meaningful meals, it will lead to healthier, happier lives.

Eating Together is Lots of Fun! (Sometimes!)

.....

In today's fast-paced, often stressful life, it seems that fewer and fewer families actually can find time to sit down, eat together and visit with each other on a regular, daily basis. And when they do: it's really not much fun. What should be a time of relaxation and sharing, often turns into an incredibly stressful occasion.

Picky Eaters: Compounding the problem is that many children are "picky eaters", which frequently leads to frustration, threatening or cajoling. Sometimes there are even threats such as, "You can't leave the table until you eat at least one bite." It doesn't have to be this way! Try the following:

- Involve children in the process. Children are much more likely to eat foods they have helped prepare.
- Let them help set the table. Being involved gives children a sense of well-being.
- Avoid making "special" foods for them. If they know you will give in they will keep demanding the same old thing.
- Set a good example. During an unhurried snack or mealtime, children have the opportunity to see adults and peers eating a balanced diet consisting of a variety of foods. Eventually, those new foods start looking very regular and not nearly so threatening.

Keep Communication Open

Conversation at mealtimes is important for children. It gives them a chance to receive verbal support and encouragement. Do not dwell on unpleasant or threatening topics while eating. Children who grow up with a comfortable opportunity for regular interaction and conversation with adults may grow into teenagers who are also comfortable sharing their lives with their parents. Having meaningful mealtimes is one way to keep the lines of communication open from the very beginning.

Should Food Items be Used for Play?

.....
It is common to use food items for play in preschool settings; however, a goal should be to make sure that food is not used inappropriately for play. This is a tough issue because there are many gray areas. Should we stop using food for play in all areas? Probably not. One example is that we use flour to cook play-dough, and flour is food. But we are not ever going to stop making playdough, However, think about the following.

- Many people do not have enough food to eat and playing with food is a poor use of it. This is probably the most important reason to not use food for play. It sends a very bad message.
- Consider safety issues. Some kinds of foods, such as beans or hard candy can cause choking if swallowed. Beans are also very difficult to remove if they are put in the nose or ears! Do not use hard candy for counting or matching; it adds way too much sugar to the diet.

If you decide to try to limit food items consider the following:

Sensory tables and art projects: Replace food items used in the sensory areas and art projects. For example, use coffee grounds, rock salt, and sand in place of rice or lentils. Classrooms should have lots of wooden beads and other stringing materials rather than stringing pasta.

Pour and measure activities: Use materials such as water, sand (colored sand is always fun!) rock salt and buckwheat hulls for pour and measure activities. Add coloring or soap to the water for a change of pace.

Avoid the nasty! There should never be a project in any age group such as pudding fingerprint or "tongue" painting with kool-aid. Using these materials with toddlers interferes with their learning to regulate what is for art and what is to eat.

Counting activities: Continue using teddy grahams, or cheerios for counting if the children are going to eat what they count.

Cooking activities: Make cooking experiences nutritious and meaningful, not just "cute". Cooking with children can be expensive, so ingredients should be nutritious and healthy.

Language Arts & Dramatic Play

There are many good books based around food. Some are old favorites like The Gingerbread Man. Many present information about different cultures, such as Grandma Francisca Remembers (see review below), and some are just plain fun. Many books inspire dramatic play activities. Extend the learning by preparing suitable props that will support children's play activities. Make a collection of books that can be used to support cooking activities.

Grandma Francisca Remembers

By Ann Morris

Grandma Francisca helps care for her granddaughter, Angelica. They live in an apartment in San Francisco, CA. The best times they spend together are when Grandma Francisca shares memories of her childhood. This book is a celebration of the Hispanic-American cultures. It includes directions for making a sock doll (see below), typical recipes, and should help children understand how family traditions are alike but different.

Morris, Ann (2002). *Grandma Francisca remembers*. Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press.

Note: This book is one in a series of books that features different cultures.

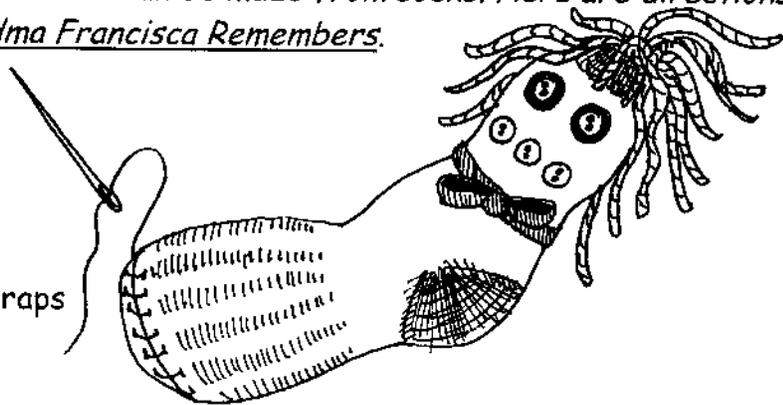
Benchmark 3.28: Shows pride in heritage and background.

Make a Sock Doll

There are all kinds of dolls that can be made from socks. Here are directions similar to those in Grandma Francisca Remembers.

You will need:

- several old socks
- buttons
- thread/needle
- scissors
- yarn and fabric scraps



Stuff one of the socks with several old ones. Sew the bottom together. Create a face by using buttons and/or fabric scraps to make eyes, nose and mouth. Use yarn to make hair.

Benchmark 2.12: Prepares art project and then works with care.

Make a Book of Grandparent Memories

It's surprising how many *Grandma, Mimi, Nana* or *Grandpa* and *Papa* memories most of us have retained of our grandparents. Many memories seem to focus around food and shared mealtime traditions. In our *Beginnings* committee meeting some of the following memories were shared.

"My grandmother always cooked at least 10 vegetables. She had a big garden, and we would help pick vegetables and get them ready to cook."

"I remember my Grandpa always gave me little scraps of biscuits."

"Grandma would let me help bake cakes. No cake mixes were allowed. She kept me busy by letting me measure the dry ingredients and then sift and sift and sift."

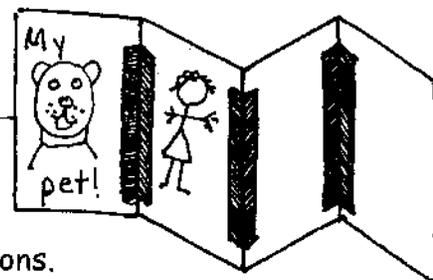
Encourage the children to think of things about their grandparents or favorite aunts or uncles. Compile the information into a *Grandparents Memory Book* for them to share.

An Accordion Fold Book

This is a simple format to use when making your Grandparents book!

You will need:

- several pieces of poster board (cut into desired size) or cardstock
- children's memories written as dictated
- artwork by the children about their memories
- masking or book tape



Write down the children's dictated stories.

Give them opportunities to draw or paint illustrations.

Arrange pages in the desired order and tape together.

Place the book where children can access it.

Benchmark 2.10: Explores and manipulates art media

Benchmark 3.27: Identified self as a member of a specific family and cultural group

Cherry Pies and Lullabies

By Lynn Resier

Family traditions help four generations of women understand that it is love that binds them together. As each mother shares traditions with her daughter, it helps each one understand both her mother and grandmother. In the book, great-grandmother, grandmother, mother and the little girl all continue the traditions of baking cherry pies, making crowns of flowers, piecing a quilt and singing lullabies. Each generation did the same thing, but it was done in their own special way.

Resier, Lynn (1998). *Cherry pies and lullabies*. NY: Greenwillow Books.

Note: See page 31 for a recipe for cherry pie.

Note: Resier has also written a book *Tortillas and Lullabies* that follows the pattern of this book. Don't miss it! It, again, shares customs between four generations: how they are alike, yet different.

Make a Clover Crown

In the summer there are usually lots of clover blooms. They are great to tie together to make a crown, necklace or bracelet. However, if you can't locate a patch of clover, look for daisies, honeysuckle, or other flowers that you can substitute. In the fall weave colorful leaves together.

You will need:

- 10/12 flowers with long stems
- nimble fingers and/or string or wire
- paper bag for collection of blooms



Go on a walk to find flowers that can be used to make the crowns.

Tie the stem of one flower just below the bloom of another flower.

Continue until the desired length has been reached.

Note: This activity is probably too difficult for pre-schoolers to do by themselves. However, let them help locate the clovers, count the number that are fastened together. . . and of course, wear the crown!

Benchmark 2.13: Recognizes and responds to beauty in the environment

Thunder cake

By Patricia Polacco

Fear of thunderstorms sent the little girl scurrying under the bed to hide. . . until her Russian grandmother (Babushka) helped her conquer her fears by gathering ingredients to make a thunder cake! This book is great for helping children recognize that while fears of storms are legitimate, they can be overcome. Grandmother had a method of baking a cake to help conquer the fear.

Polacco, Patricia (1990). *Thunder cake*. NY: Philomel Books.

Note: See page 32 for the recipe for a great chocolate cake. . . With or without a thunderstorm!

Discussion of Fears

After reading the book *Thunder Cake*, invite children to share any fears that they have. Fear of the dark, thunder and loud noises are all common concerns for young children. Help them think of ways that they can conquer these fears.

Benchmark 5.6: Uses words to communicate ideas and feelings

Benchmark 5.8: Participates in group discussion

Old Black Fly

By Jim Aylesworth

This book proves that alphabet books can be fun! Stephen Gammell's illustrations track the destructive path that the old black fly makes throughout the day. While flying around, he defeats Baby, Mama and Gramma as they cry "Shoo, fly, Shoo fly, Shoo!"

Aylesworth, Jim (1992). *Old black fly*. NY: Henry Holt and Co.

Note: Let children sing the "Shoo Fly" part.

Benchmark 2.4: Participates freely in music activities

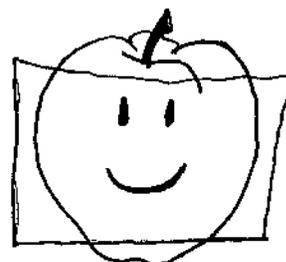
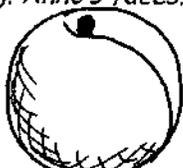


Anno's Faces

By Mitsumasa Anno

Simple paintings of a large variety of fruits and vegetables are featured in this picture book for very young children. A clear plastic see-through card is included that allows children to place either smiling or frowning faces on the items. Recommended for infants and toddlers.

Anno, Mitsumasa (1989). *Anno's faces*. NY: Philomel Books.

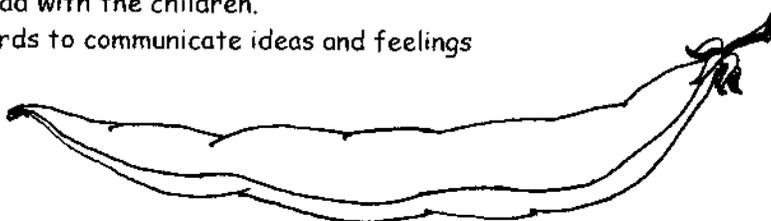


Idea: Bring real fruits and vegetables so that you can compare the real items with the pictures. Discuss being happy and sad with the children.

Benchmark 5.6: Uses words to communicate ideas and feelings

Today is Monday

By Eric Carle



Today is Monday, and Monday is string beans. . . So starts Eric Carle's journey through the days of the week. Each day is special because of the food that is prepared. Repetition of the days and daily foods makes this book educational, but it is mainly lots of fun.

Carle, Eric (1993). *Today is Monday*. NY: Scholastic.

Note: Try serving the foods mentioned on that special day of the week. Display the numeral.

Benchmark 3.14: Demonstrates the ability to number and sequence

Paper for Illustrations (similar to Eric Carle's)

Eric Carle's colorful illustrations are made from tissue paper and paints. See page 26 for ideas to make similar ones.

Benchmark 2.10: Explores and manipulates art media.

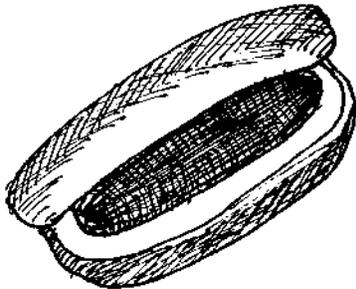
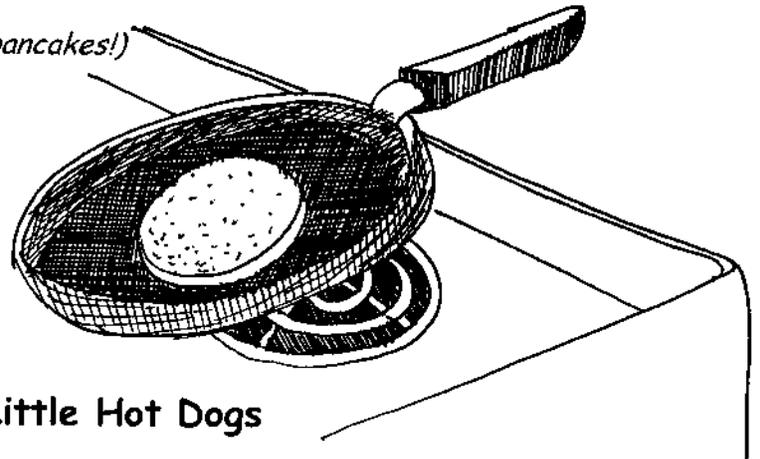
Poems and Fingerplays

Mix a Pancake

(Of course, you need to actually make some pancakes!)

Mix a pancake,
Stir a pancake,
Pop it in a pan.
Fry the pancake,
Toss the pancake,
Catch it if you can!

traditional



Five Little Hot Dogs

Five little hot dogs, sizzling in the pan.
One got hot, and it went BAM!
Four little hot dogs, sizzling in the pan.
One got hot, and it went BAM!
(continue through 3, 2, 1.)

traditional

Ten, Ten, Two, One

How many fingers? How many toes? Hold up fingers and point to eyes and nose.

10... 10... 2... 1

10... 10... 2... 1

I have 10 fingers.

I have 10 toes.

I have 2 eyes,

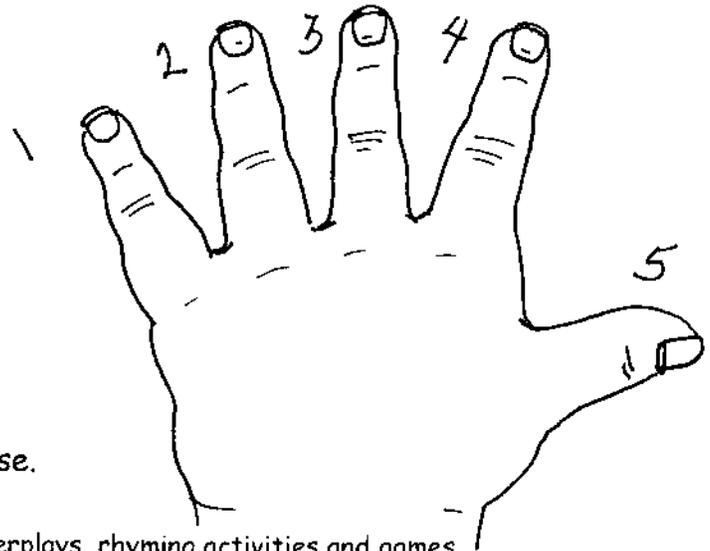
And only 1 nose!

I feel with my fingers,

I walk with my toes.

I see with my eyes

And I (sniff, sniff) smell with my nose.



Benchmark 5.5: Participates in songs, fingerplays, rhyming activities and games

Did you know?

The sense of smell is one of the most powerful memories we have. Invite children to share their favorite smell.

Five Little Bagels

This game is a favorite of children at the UA Nursery School.

Five little bagels in a bakery shop,
Round and fat with sprinkles on top.
Along came _____ (insert child's name) with a penny to pay.
She/he bought that bagel, and she/he took it away.

Note: Make cardboard bagels, then let children have pennies to pay for the bagels as they take them away.

Benchmark 3.14: Demonstrates the ability to order and sequence

My Thumbs are Beginning to Wiggle

(Babies have been entertained with thumbs for years.)

My thumbs are beginning to wiggle
My thumbs are beginning to wiggle.
My thumbs are beginning to wiggle
—around, around and around.

Note: Make up other verses such as:

My nose is beginning to smell. . . Something good to eat.

Benchmark 5.5: Participates in songs, fingerplays,
rhyming activities and games



Celery

(bring some celery for crunching)

Celery, raw,
Develops the jaw.
But celery stewed,
Is more quietly chewed.

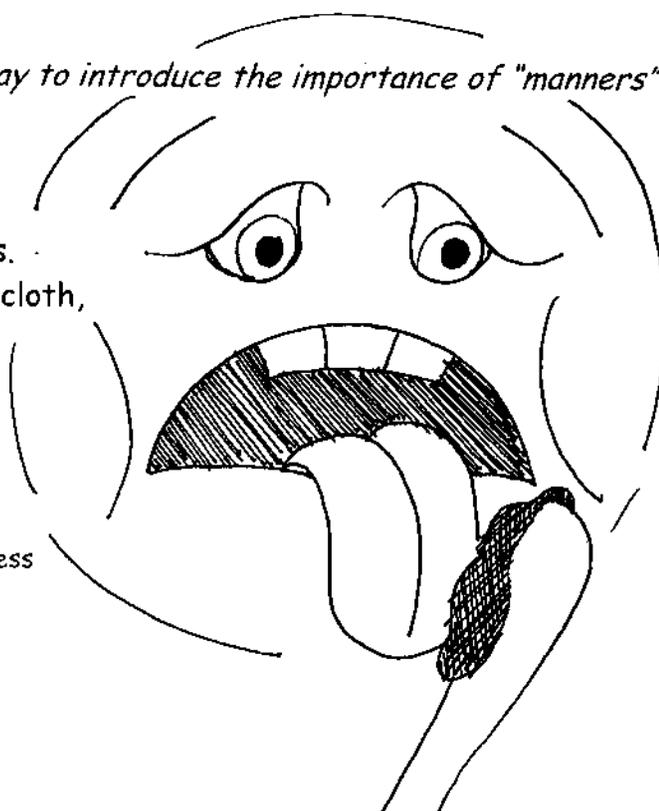
Ogden Nash

Table Manners

(Making fun of the Goops is a fun way to introduce the importance of "manners" to children.)

The Goops they lick their fingers.
And the Goops they lick their knives.
They spill their broth, on the table-cloth,
Oh, they live untidy lives.
The Goops they talk while eating,
And loud and fast they chew.
So that is why I'm glad
That I'm not a Goop. Are you?

Gelett Burgess



Dramatic Play

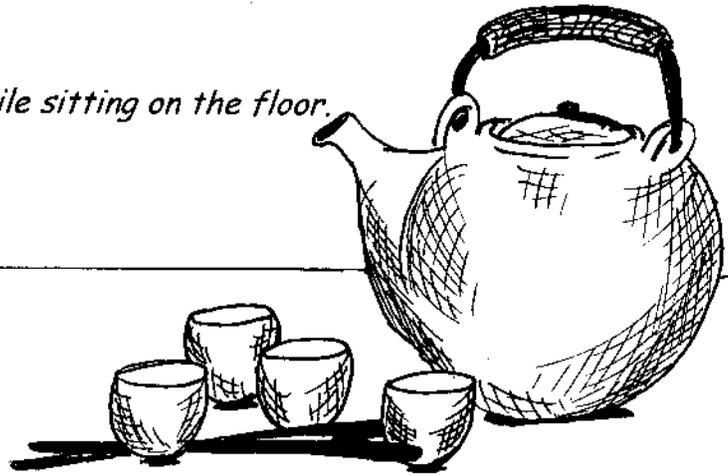
Sometimes all it takes are a few new items to stimulate a whole new theme for dramatic play. Here are some things that can be added to the area that will help children understand family traditions and cultural differences.

Celebrate Asian Cultures

Many cultures eat at low tables while sitting on the floor.

Add :

- floor pillows
- rice bowls
- porcelain spoons
- chop sticks
- tea pot and small cups
- silk fabric



Note: Invite someone from a Japanese, Chinese, Thai, or Korean restaurant to visit and share their mealtime traditions.

Benchmark 2.2: Participates in dramatic play themes that become more involved and complex.

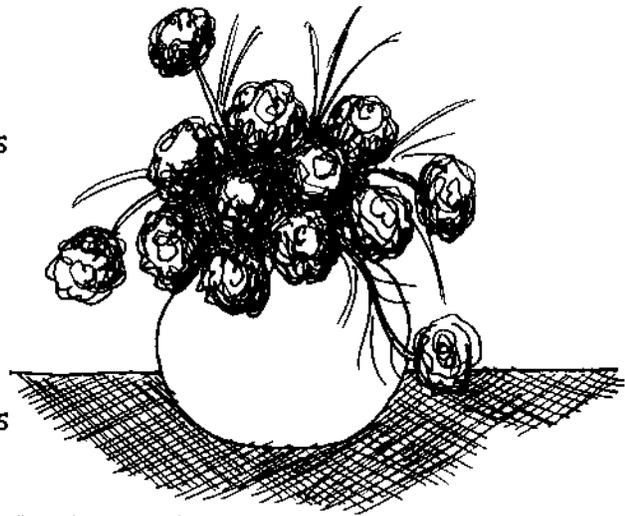
The Flower Shop

A vase of beautiful flowers can make a ho-hum meal a real dining experience.

Collect some of the following items and create a flower shop where children can design centerpieces for their table settings.

Items to collect:

- small containers in different sizes and shapes
- pretty leaves, twigs, flowers
- florist tape and rubber bands
- tissue paper and ribbons
- art materials (markers, poster board and/or pictures of flowers) to make advertising signs



Note: Add a cash-register, order pads, and signs for "specials" and pretend money.

Benchmark 2.1: Shows creativity and imagination in play with materials and props

Benchmark 2.2: Participates in dramatic play themes that become more involved and complex

Benchmark 2.3: Assumes various roles in dramatic play situations

Music & Movement

A Recipe for Healthy Bodies should include lots of music and movement. It's really simple. Mix up a healthy helping of singing, playing instruments and moving to different rhythms. This will result in lots of benefits. Here are a few reasons to make music and movement a large part of your daily routine.

- It's just plain fun! Singing can lift the spirits and the emotions.
- Words in songs help children develop language.
- Singing and moving improves small and large motor development, flexibility, and fitness.
- Following directions from music teaches listening skills.
- Music and movement offer opportunities for creativity.
- Music teaches new concepts.
- Songs ease stress during activity transitions.
- Rhyming ability aids reading readiness.

Vernoice Baldwin

Let's Get Started!

Plan for music and sing throughout the day.

Set up a music center which will allow creative movement. Provide props and instruments that are culturally diverse. Here are some things to include:

a variety of instruments, such as rhythm sticks, tambourines, maracas, rain sticks, and drums

a music source such as a CD player and a variety of musical styles

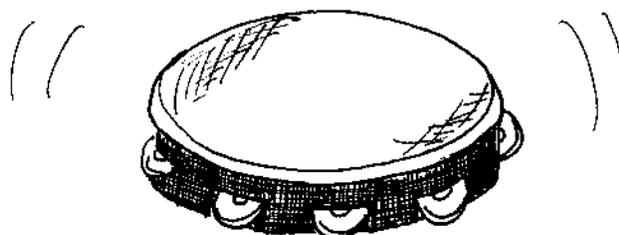
an assortment of scarves and pieces of ribbons and fabrics

tap shoes

waxed paper for ice skating

hoops for movement activities

exercise bands

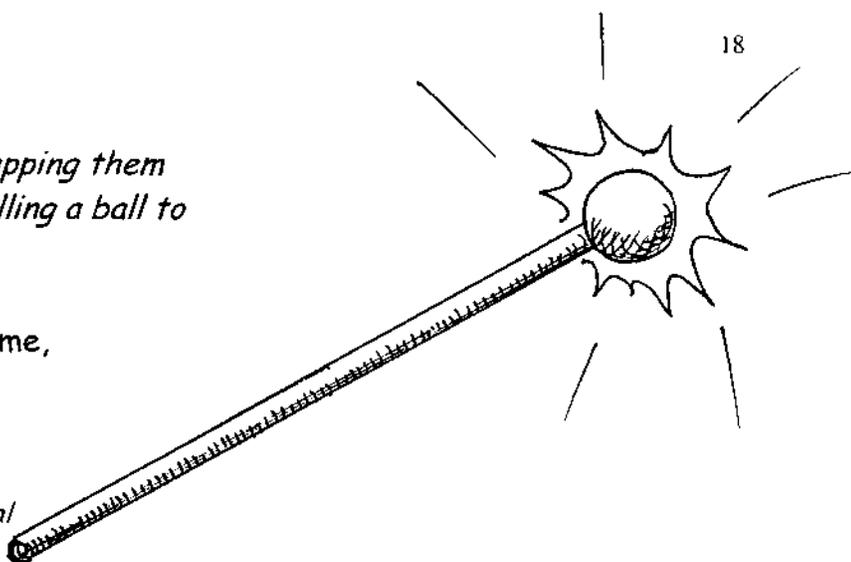


Greet Them with a Song!

Make each child feel special by tapping them with a prince/princess wand or rolling a ball to them as you sing this song.

I'm glad you came, I'm glad you came,
I'm glad you came today.
I'm very, very glad you came,
I'm glad you came today.

traditional



Dealing with Emotions

If you're happy, what do you do? Why, just clap your hands.

If you're sad and you know it, what can you do? Discuss options with children.

Sometimes putting on a smile will help the sadness go away.

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.
If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it.
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

If you're sad and you know it, say Boo Hoo.
If you're sad and you know it, say Boo Hoo.
If you're sad and you know it, then your face will surely show it.
If you're sad and you know it, say Boo Hoo.

If you're angry and you know it, say I'm mad.
If you're angry and you know it, say I'm mad.
If you're angry and you know it, then your face will surely show it.
If you're angry and you know it, say, I'm mad!

traditional

Note: Make feeling plates to help children recognize their emotions. Invite them to hold them up when singing the song.

Benchmark 1.21: Becomes involved in solving social problems (conflicts)



Everybody Stand up!

Tune: Shortenin' Bread

Sometimes we forget how beneficial simple stretching and deep breathing can be. Try this simple exercise.

Everybody stand up, stand up, stand up,
 Everybody stand up: Please stand up.
 Everybody take a breath, take a breath, take a breath.
 Everybody take a breath: Please take a breath.
 Everybody stretch high, stretch high, stretch high.
 Everybody stretch high: Please stretch high.
 Everybody stretch low, stretch low, stretch low,
 Everybody stretch low: Please stretch low.

Vernoice Baldwin



Teddy Bear's Picnic

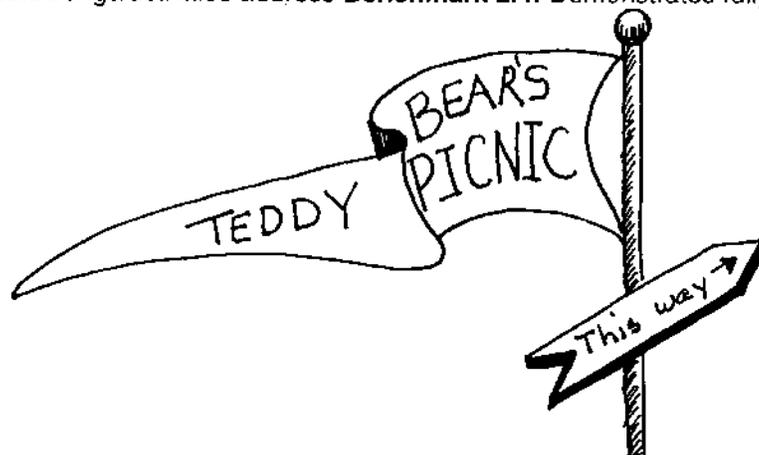
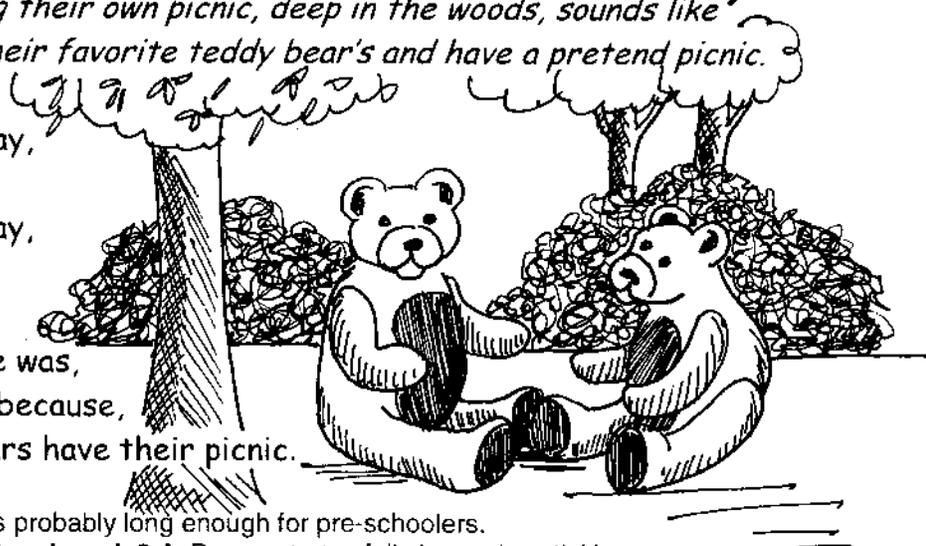
The idea of teddy bears having their own picnic, deep in the woods, sounds like fun. Invite children to bring their favorite teddy bear's and have a pretend picnic.

If you go out in the woods today,
 You're sure of a big surprise.
 If you go out in the woods today,
 You'd better go in disguise.

For every bear that ever there was,
 Will gather there for certain, because,
 Today's the day the teddy bears have their picnic.

Note: There are other verses but this is probably long enough for pre-schoolers.

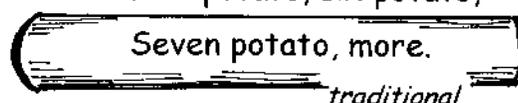
Note: Music songs/activities address **Benchmark 2.4:** Demonstrates fully in music activities.



One Potato, Two Potato

This is a chant that has traditionally been used when choosing teams for games. For preschoolers, use the chant and motions without having anyone OUT! Make fists with both hands, then alternately tap out the rhythm by hitting one fist on top of the other.

One potato, two potato,
Three potato, four.
Five potato, six potato,
Seven potato, more.



traditional

Peas Porridge Hot

What is "peas porridge" anyway?

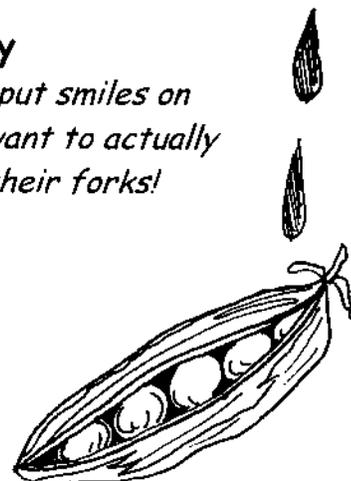
Peas porridge hot,
Peas porridge cold.
Some like it hot,
Some like it cold.
Some like it in the pot,
Nine days old.

I Eat My Peas with Honey

This nonsense chant is sure to put smiles on faces and maybe children will want to actually try eating peas with honey on their forks!

I eat my peas with honey,
I've done it all my life.
It makes the peas taste funny,
But it keeps them on the knife.

traditional



Sweetly Sings the Donkey

Sweetly sings the donkey, at the break of day.
If you do not feed him, This is what he'll say.
Hee Haw, Hee Haw, Hee Haw, Hee Haw.

traditional

Note: End with a donkey kick!

Muffin Man

Oh, do you know the Muffin Man,
the Muffin Man, the Muffin Man.

Oh, do you know the Muffin Man,
Who lives on Drury Lane?

traditional

Note: Discuss favorite muffins. Make some! Ask children where they live.

Math & Science

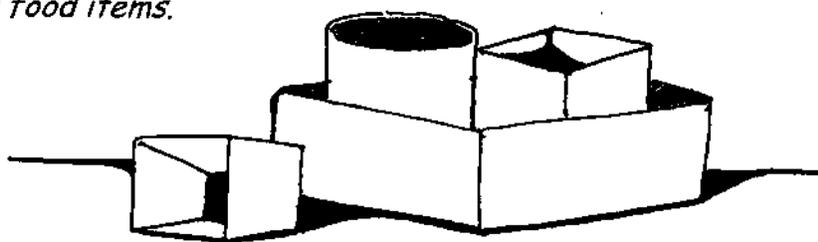
Concrete (real) objects that children can handle, touch, smell, examine, and shake, are essential to science and math activities. When using charts, posters or pictures of objects, try to first introduce children to the real thing. After gaining first hand experience children relate much better to printed images. There are many food-related objects that can be used to introduce math and science concepts. Here are some ideas to try.

Sorting apples

This can be done with apples or other food items.

You will need:

- an assortment of apples
- containers—baskets or boxes



Buy an assortment of colors and sizes of apples. Encourage children to sort them by placing them into baskets or boxes.

Benchmark 3:10: Classifies objects by physical features such as shape or color

Benchmark 3:11: Classifies objects conceptually (things that go together)

Weighing Produce

Children are probably familiar with home bath scales; however, the idea of weighing food items may be new to them. Discuss both sides being equal weight, but not necessarily equal in size.

You will need:

- a balance scale or kitchen scale
- apples or other fruit/vegetable

Put out a balance scale and let children discover how many apples, nuts, or other food items, it takes to balance the scale.

Use the kitchen scale to get the actual numerical weight of the apples.

Chart the findings. Compare. Are some things bigger, or do they weigh more?

Benchmark 3.22: Makes comparison (scientific process: comparing)

Yeast is Amazing!

Children may/may not be familiar with the wonderful aroma of yeast bread as it bakes. Explain that the yeast is what makes the rolls rise. This experiment is designed to help solve the mystery of what starts the action. Ask children to predict what will happen in the following activity.

You will need:

- dry yeast
- 3 clear glasses
- warm water
- sugar
- measuring spoons and cups



Put a teaspoon of yeast in each glass.

Leave one glass dry.

Add warm water to the second glass until it is half full.

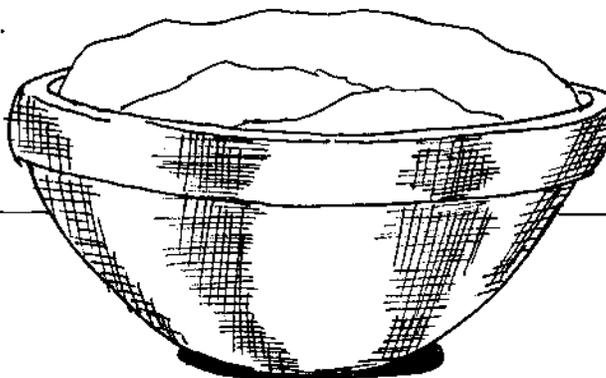
To the third glass, add warm water + 1 teaspoon of sugar.

Set all three glasses aside in a warm place for about half an hour.

Observe: What happened to the three glasses? Do they all look the same?

The yeast also feeds on sugar to produce carbon dioxide. It is this gas that makes bread rise. When the dough is cooked, the trapped gas leaves the little holes you see in bread that gives it its appearance and texture.

See p.32 for a recipe for bread.



Note: Nothing will have happened in the dry yeast glass or the yeast and water glass. However, in the glass with water, yeast, and sugar there should be lots of bubbles to see. These are bubbles of carbon dioxide. Yeast is a single cell non-green plant (fungus) that feeds on sugar and releases carbon dioxide gas.

Benchmark 3.23: Show awareness of cause-effect relationships

Alike but different

All citrus fruits are not the same. Invite children to notice differences.

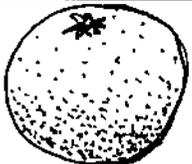
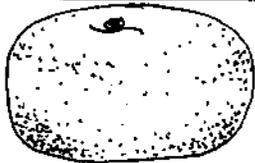
You will need:

- 1 lemon
- 1 orange
- 1 grapefruit
- 1 lime

These fruits are all considered citrus fruit. Have children examine them and then make a chart of how they are different.

Benchmark 3.21: Uses words to describe the characteristics of objects (scientific process: communicating)

Benchmark 3.20: Uses senses to learn about the characteristics of the environment and to collect data (scientific process: observing)

CITRUS FRUITS		
Size (large to small)	Texture (rough to smooth)	Taste (sweet to sour)
		
		
		
		

Note: Create a chart on the floor with masking tape. Let children place real fruit in the proper spot.

Open them up! Look, collect seeds and make juice.

There's something really satisfying about squeezing juice. Make sure each child gets a turn.

You will need:

- juicer or lemon squeezer
- knife (adults only)
- cup to collect seeds
- cup to collect juice
- potting soil and cups to plant seeds in



Cut the fruits into halves.

Let children observe them.

Squeeze the half to extract juice. This is something children can do, so make sure that everyone gets a turn.

Extract the seeds and save to plant.

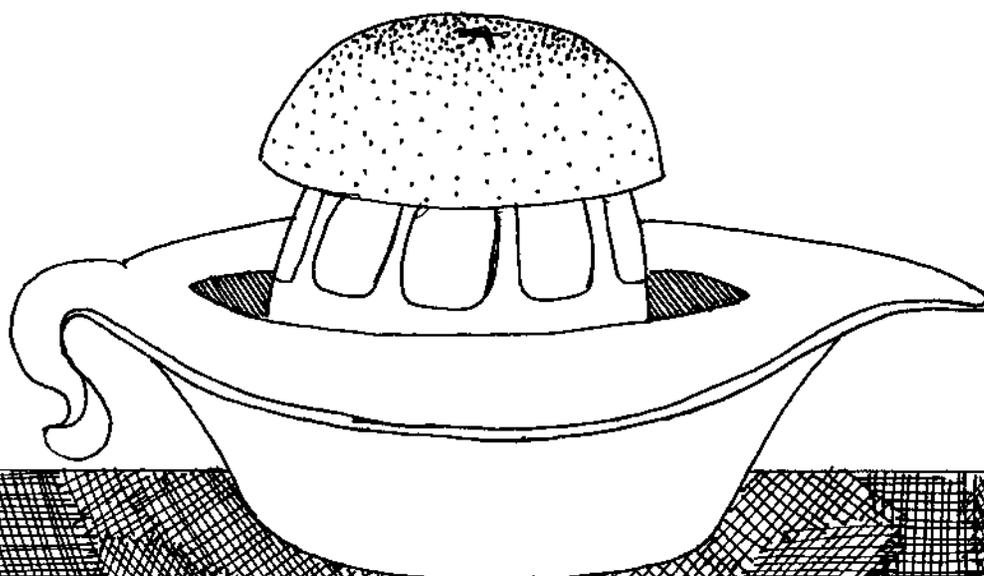
Let children taste samples of the juice.

If you have enough juice, add sugar and water to make fruit drinks.

After sampling the juice, look at the seeds. Invite children to predict if they think they will grow into trees?

Plant seeds in small paper cups, water, and place in a sunny spot.

WAIT AND WATCH!



Creative Art

Letting children engage in a variety of art experiences is a way to ensure their success at many levels of development. They are able to communicate by thinking of an experience, idea or feeling and then developing symbols to express it. To be able to think about something and then express it is really a major accomplishment. Art activities promote social development as well. Children learn to work with each other, discuss what they are doing and exchange ideas. Make art activities available to the children each and every day!

Looking to See. . . Drawing Takes Practice!

Even young children can learn to observe objects in more detail as they draw them. Observational drawing invites the child to really study something. Then he can use his creative experiences to represent what he sees. Invite them to draw food items before they eat them.

You will need:

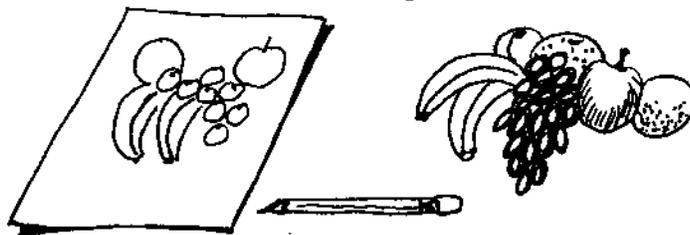
- paper
- markers, pencils or chalk
- fruits or vegetables



Encourage children to handle and closely observe the food items. If there are two apples, challenge them to find how the two are alike or different, then invite them to draw or document what they have discovered.

Idea: Locate copies of paintings/drawings from famous artists that include food items. Display.

Note: This could expand into a book of drawings of their favorite foods.



Benchmark 2.11: Creates drawings and paintings that gradually become more realistic

Benchmark 3.22: Makes comparison (scientific process: comparing)

Make the Most of the Sensory Table

Does it seem like you're always putting the same old thing in the sensory table? Here are some ideas to add new interest as children investigate and explore.

Add:

- rock salt or aquarium rocks
- "Gack", "Goop" or "Clean Mud" (recipes below)
- potting soil—with plastic flowers, plastic flower pots and spoons
- water—all different ways—different temperatures, with food coloring added, with soap added, ice cubes, etc.
- leaves
- cornstarch packing peanuts
- wrapping paper scraps or wallpaper scraps with scissors
- bubble wrap
- Buckwheat shells from an old "bucky" pillow
- Sand—colored sand
- Seashells or Birdseed

Goop

You will need:

- cornstarch
- water
- plastic tub

Place cornstarch in tub, invite children to feel the texture and consistency. Then add water until the cornstarch begins to change consistency. What happens when it is picked up?

Gak

You will need:

- glue
- liquid starch
- mixing spoon and bowl

Stir together glue and starch. Mix and add more of each ingredient until it is a putty like consistency. If stringy add more glue; if sticky more starch.

Note: You can add color. Refrigerate.

Clean Mud

Mix shredded toilet paper, shaved ivory soap, and a little water. Enjoy!

Seed Catalog Collage

I know it sounds simple, but it has been observed that even many adults do not have good cutting and gluing skills! Collages are great ways to let children practice cutting and gluing.

You will need:

- several seed catalogs (ask parents for old copies)
- scissors
- glue
- construction paper

After children have selected and cut several items from the catalogs, they can then glue the items to the construction paper.

Note: This is a good opportunity to give children choices by letting them select the paper color.

Note: Gluing is not always easy. Demonstrate for children how to apply glue by starting in the center and spreading glue to the edges. Placing glue for each child in an egg carton with a q-tip for an applicator is one way that may make it easier. Another idea is to allow children to dip small sponges into the glue and use them as spreaders.

Benchmark 2.12: Preplans art project and then works with care

Tissue Paper Collages

Tearing paper is good exercise for little fingers. Provide tissue paper, diluted Elmer's glue and create special papers. When dry, additional paint and/or crayons can be added. These papers can then be cut into shapes to create a collage, (a la Eric Carle illustrations).

You will need:

- an Eric Carle book
- poster board or fairly heavy paper
- assorted colors of tissue paper
- school glue + water
- brushes

Read an Eric Carle book with the children. Point out that Eric Carle made the papers that have been used to create the illustrations. Then, dilute the glue so that it can be applied easily with a brush. Tear or cut the tissue paper into fairly small pieces. Paint over them with glue. Overlap colors, and create new designs. If desired, the papers can be cut into shapes to create a collage.

Benchmark 4.6: Coordinates eye and hand movements to complete tasks

Food & Nutrition

Cooking and Food

Cooking experiences in the pre-school classroom provide wonderful opportunities for children to learn. However, sometimes activities may not meet the goals for which they were selected. They can also be overly expensive. The New School, in Fayetteville, recently decided to try to improve the quality of their cooking projects. To get started, Pre-school coordinator, Karen Beaton, asked staff members to consider the following questions.

- What will children learn from it?
- Am I considering health/safety issues?
- Am I able to incorporate literacy, math, and science?
- How can I actively involve each child in the process?
- Can this project/recipe be used to teach the children good nutrition?
- How will I use this project to build skills, to tie into our unit, and to build on previous knowledge?

Be careful how you spend your money on food and cooking activities in the classroom. Make sure you have evaluated and decided that the project is a learning experience worth the money you spend on it. As always, be aware that childhood obesity is a major problem nation wide. Thus, try to avoid foods that are "empty calories" such as those loaded with sugar and fat.

Now... Let's Get Cooking!



Ideas for Cooking with Kids Through the Ages

Cooking activities should be age-appropriate. Don't expect a toddler to make complicated recipes!

Toddlers: 2 kinds of dry cereal to stir.

2 Years: Stirring liquids- make pudding, juice popsicles.

3 years: Kabobs with fruit or vegetables, construction with fruit or vegetables, stuffed celery, vegetables & dip, trail mix.

3-4 years: Storybook cooking—Green Eggs & Ham, Stone Soup, Gingerbread Man, The Pancake, Bread & Jam for Frances, sandwiches, cheese dips & chips.

4-5 years: Ethnic food: tacos, pasta, potato pancakes, individual pizzas. Also stew, pigs in a blanket, haystacks, muffins, bread, pretzels

Malt-o-meal Muffins (melt-in-your-mouth-muffins)

Ingredients:

- 1-1/4 cup flour
- 1 cup malt-o-meal (maple/brown sugar flavored)
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 egg (beaten)
- 1 Tablespoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Mix dry ingredients together. Add oil and egg. Stir until dry ingredients are just moistened. Do not over-stir. Place in muffin pan. Bake at 400 degrees 18-29 minutes. Makes 12 full-size muffins or 36 miniature ones. Shorten cooking time for miniature muffins.

Note: Sing Do you know *The Muffin Man*?

Benchmark: 3.14 Demonstrates ability to order and sequence

Benchmark: 3.18 Shows an awareness of time concepts

Making a Recipe Chart

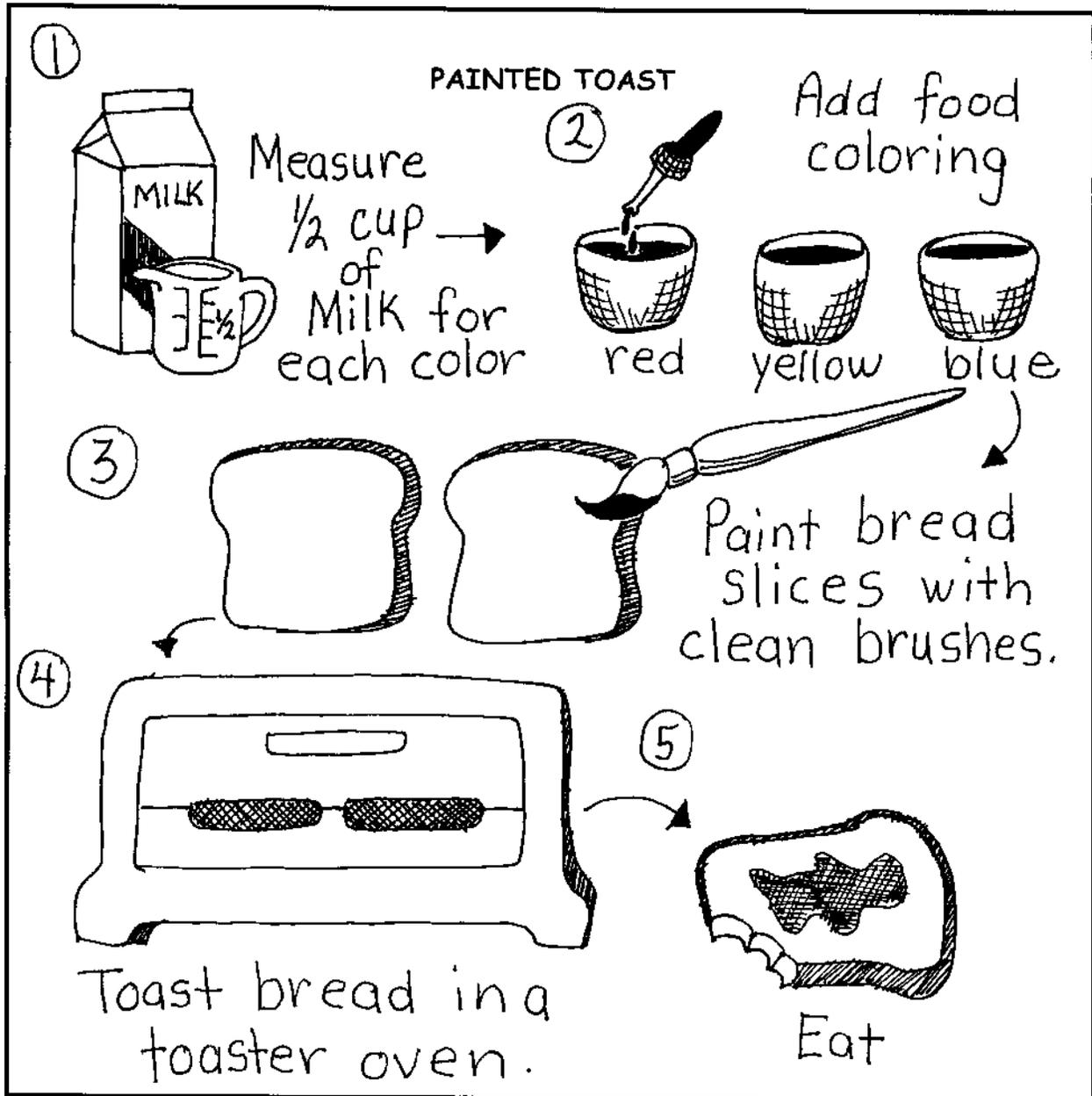
Even young children can follow a recipe when the words are augmented with pictures.

You will need:

- poster board or large paper
- markers
- a recipe

Here's a sample recipe chart for PAINTED TOAST.

Benchmark 3.14: Demonstrates the ability to order and sequence



Can she bake a cherry pie?

What could be better than a flavorful cherry pie?

Ingredients:

- 1 can pie cherries
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- refrigerated pastry dough



Open the pastry dough and use one piece to line a 9" pie plate. Mix the cherries, sugar and flour. Pour into the pastry crust. Top with small pieces of butter, sprinkle with cinnamon and top with the remaining pastry crust. Decorate if desired. Bake about 40 minutes or until crust is golden brown. 350 degrees.

Chocolate Sheet Cake

Chocolate lovers had good news recently when it was validated that chocolate actually is good for you. BUT REMEMBER ONLY SERVE SMALL AMOUNTS OF SWEETS!

Ingredients:

- 2 cups flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup butter
- 1/4 cup cocoa
- 1 cup water
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup buttermilk OR sour cream
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon vanilla



Mix flour and sugar together. Mix all other ingredients together and bring to a boil in pan. Mix all together and beat well. Pour in jelly roll pan that has been greased and lightly floured. Bake at 400 F for approximately 30 minutes. Instead of using frosting, dust the top lightly with powdered sugar.

Note: This would be a good time to show children different forms of chocolate such as cocoa, unsweetened bars and chocolate syrup.

For a Yeasty Smell. . . Bake Some Rolls!

Read a book such as *Bread, Bread, Bread* by Ann Morris that shares information about breads around the world. Hot Rolls are a favorite in Arkansas!

Hot Rolls

- 2 (1/4-ounce) packages active dry yeast
- 1/2 cups warm water
- 2 cups warm milk
- 1/2 cup vegetable shortening
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 7 cups all-purpose or bread flour

Dissolve yeast in 1/2 cup of the warm water; set aside to cool.

In a medium bowl, cream together shortening and sugar.

Add egg and salt.

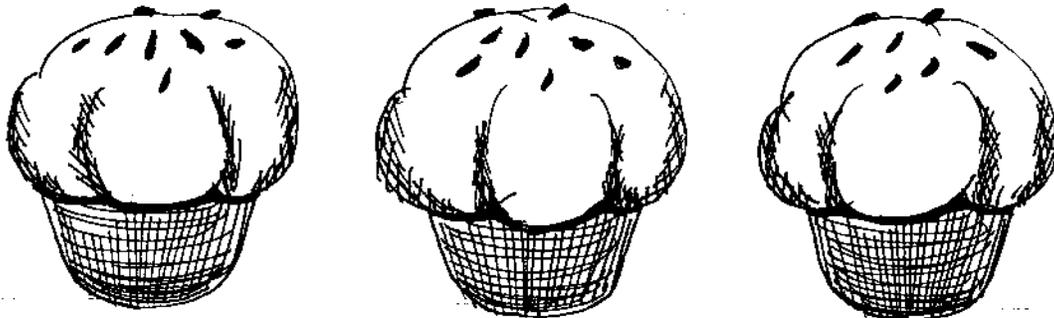
Add yeast mixture and cups warm milk. Mix in enough flour, up to 7 cups, to make a soft dough. Place in a large greased bowl; turning once to coat. Cover and left rise in a warm place until doubled, about 1 hour.

Grease a baking sheet.

Form dough into rolls and place on baking sheet; cover and let rise in warm place until double, about 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Bake rolls until golden, about 15 minutes.

(makes 36)



Guidelines for Snacks

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Children have small stomachs. They need snacks! Consider snacks as mini-meals that provide nutrients and food energy a child needs to grow, play, and learn. Most young children do best when they eat four to six times a day.

Keep food group snacks handy: for example, raw vegetables, fruit, juice, milk, cheese, yogurt, bread, peanut butter, and hard-cooked eggs.

Let snacks fill in the gaps: If a child misses juice for breakfast, offer fruit at snack time.

Time snacks carefully: two to three hours before meals. That way the child will be hungry for lunch or supper.,

Offer snacks to satisfy hunger: Skip the urge to offer a snack to quiet tears, calm a child, or reward behavior. That can lead to emotional overeating later on.

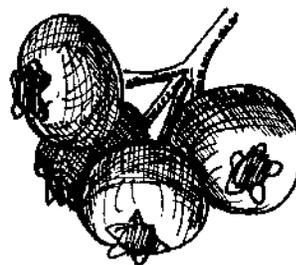
Keep snacks small: If the child is still hungry, he or she can ask for more. Let the child decide what's enough.

Encourage tooth brushing after snacking: especially after eating bread, crackers, and sweet foods.

Go easy on snacks with added sugars: Offer milk, juice or water as snack drinks. Soft drinks and fruit drinks that are not 100% juice can crowd out foods your child needs to grow and stay healthy.

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Quick snacks can be:

- whole fruit, sliced into finger foods
- berries
- raw, cut-up vegetables
- graham crackers
- string cheese
- cheese and crackers
- bagel and peanut butter (make sure there are no peanut allergies)
- frozen yogurt



Adapted from: Nibble for Health 22: Nutrition Newsletters for Parents of Young Children, USDA, Food and Nutrition Service

Parent Page—

Family Dinners Are Great

Family dinners are great ways for parents to stay connected with children. Slow-paced family meals with your children are more important than ever. There are many benefits of eating together as a family.

It provides a natural setting to foster family togetherness.

It is a nice way to share about things that are happening.

It gives children a chance to receive verbal support and encouragement.

It gives children a sense of a scheduled event to help them feel secure.

Children learn to sit calmly and use appropriate manners.

Children see adults and other siblings eating a balanced diet.

It helps keep the lines of communication open.

Here are a few tips:

- Cook with the children. Young children can stir or help set the table.
- Plan special meal nights, such as Friday Pizza and Salad night.
- Let children decorate place mats.
- Turn off the television.
- Add flowers for a centerpiece. Let children pick the flowers.
- Occasionally use the good dishes.
- Begin by committing to one dinner per week, then add more.
- Keep the conversation pleasant. Be sure to ask each child questions about his/her day. Avoid unpleasant topics.
- If dinners don't work, consider family breakfasts or weekend lunches.
- Move outside for a picnic, or even spread a blanket on the floor of the living room.

Note: Compiled by Christina Barton

Parents Page

Beginnings 2005-2006(2)

Caring for the Caregiver

By Mardi Crandall

Taking a Time Out

As you are probably aware, there is much discussion these days about the possible misuse of time out as we manage classrooms of young children. Too often children are threatened with a time out. "Andy, do I have to give you a time out?" has underlying currents of, "You'd better change or else!" Used in this way, the intent is to make children *suffer*—suffer humiliation, intimidation, or fear of adult power. Sadly, children do not learn much when they are suffering.

Used correctly, time out can be an effective teaching tool, a form of constructive guidance. It takes a supportive adult to say, "I think you need a chance to think about this. Let's talk about the situation." There is no anger or shame. It becomes a real opportunity to reflect the child's feelings and let him know that his feelings are important to you.

It's the same with adults. We don't function to our fullest potential when we are suffering. Caregivers who are in the classroom with young children are often suffering from stress. Time out can be just the thing to help. You can say to children, "Give me a minute. I need a time out to think about my feelings."

When you handle stress in this way, you are modeling for children. When you show them that a time out is a good way to cope, you are teaching a lifelong skill that they can use.

Adult time out is not easy, but it can be very effective. Multi-task a bit. While watching children carefully, take your mind to a pleasant picnic spot, the mall, or Denver for a moment. While children sleep, relax your muscles by thinking about relaxation. Let the tightness go! When you have a break, use it for its intended purpose—to refresh yourself from the stress. When you fail to take care of yourself, you fail to be truly caring of your children!

Keep it Natural!

By Karen Beaton

"Simple experiences with nature can be very powerful opportunities for teaching and learning with very young children. Observing and talking about the many sensory aspects of nature—the sounds and smells of the wind and rain, changing colors of the season, the tastes of fruits, vegetables and herbs—inspire interest and appreciation of the beauty of nature."

Young Children, May 2005

Some examples of free or inexpensive natural materials are:

- *dried flowers and leaves*
- *bamboo and things made from bamboo*
- *buckwheat hulls—cut open an old "bucky" pillow and pour the contents into your sensory table. Buckwheat hulls are light, make a crunchy sound and they make a wonderful sensory experience.*
- *day lily stalks—cut dried day lily stalks and then cut them to a variety of lengths. Put them in the art center for collage.*
- *seashells, driftwood, coral, starfish, and things from the ocean.*

Natural Materials to Invest in are:

Wooden unit blocks and hollow blocks

"Kapla" blocks (small flat blocks that are all the same size and wonderful for building.

"Tree blocks" (blocks cut from tree limbs) they can also be ordered from early childhood catalogs.

Naturally colored sands (especially "Jurassic Sand") It is expensive but can be played with in a variety of ways. It can be washed and used endlessly.

Baskets (often found at yard sales) bamboo trays, wooden trays, are great to use for classroom displays.

Fabric—Collect a variety of soft scarves and other silky fabrics, burlap, cotton, wool, and linen.

Multicultural fabrics—Examples are African printed cloth or batik prints.

Use them on a table to display items, tablecloths in dramatic play, or hang in dramatic play for dress up.

Special for Infants and Toddlers

By Kimberly Witte

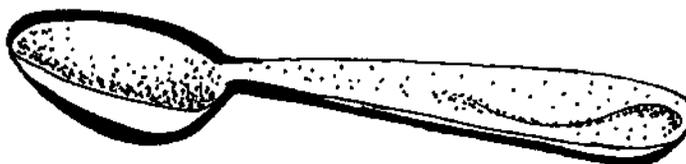
Meaningful Meals with Infants and Toddlers

Ellyn Satter is one of the foremost experts in explaining best practices in feeding infants and providing meals for toddlers. She describes the division of responsibility of infant feeding. The parent is responsible for the *what of feeding*—breast milk or formula. The child is responsible for everything else—*when, where, how much, how fast*. The division of responsibility changes somewhat for toddlers in that the parent is responsible for the *what, when and where of feeding*; the child is responsible for *how much and whether of eating*.

Plan for infants and toddlers to have meaningful experiences at mealtimes by thinking of things that you enjoy most about meals.

- o Try to time meals so that the child is hungry but not famished.
- o Engage the child in peaceful conversation, which includes gentle physical contact and lots of eye contact.
- o Eat with your child, once he/she is eating solids. This makes mealtimes a pleasant social experience where the child can learn to imitate your manners and social skills.
- o Give lots of chances to try new foods and serve old favorites often.
- o Start with small portions and serve more if the child wants more.

For more information about children and nutrition, visit Ellen Satter and Associates website at <http://www.ellynsatter.com>.



Resources and References



There are some wonderful resource books about cooking with children available. Here are a few that you might consider adding to your reference library.

Appleton, Julie, McCrea, Nadine & Patterson, Carla. (2001). *Do carrots make you see better?* Beltsville, Maryland: Gryphon House.

Colker, Laura J. (2005). *The cooking book*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Cook, Deanna F. (1995). *Kids' multicultural cookbook*. Charlotte, VT: Williamson Publishing.

Crocker, Betty (1995). *Betty Crocker's cookin' with kids*. NY: Macmillan.

Foote, Barbara (1997). *Cup cooking: Individual child-portion picture recipes*. Beltsville, Maryland: Gryphon House.

Nelson, L., Martin, S. et. Al. (2001). *Cooking really counts. Beginnings*. Little Rock, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.

Kinder Krunches. . . Available through Discovery Toys www.discoverytoysinc.com/

Kapla Blocks. . . Available through the Kapla Store: www.kaplaworld.com/store/

Jurassic Sands. . . Available at: www.jurassicsand.com/ or

Jurassic Sands
1961 Scenic Drive
Salt Lake City, UT 84108

The USDA MyPyramid for Kids

As you probably know the USDA Food Pyramid has been re-designed. Check out the web-site www.MyPyramid.gov/kids/ Games and posters with explanations of new guidelines are available.